

highest level of education was a four-year college degree, and 336 for those who had completed some graduate studies beyond the four-year degree. Similar patterns are evident on the document and quantitative scales, where those with higher levels of education also displayed more advanced literacy skills.

Stated another way, the difference in average prose proficiencies between those who completed no more than 8 years of education and those who had completed at least some graduate work is nearly 160 points. This translates to a gap of roughly three proficiency levels, representing, on average, a very large difference in literacy skills and strategies. This may mean the difference, for example, between being able to identify a piece of information in a short news article and being able to compare and contrast information in lengthy text. While adults with less than a high school education performed primarily in Level 1, those who finished secondary school performed, on average, in the high end of Level 2, those who received a college degree demonstrated average proficiencies associated with the high end of Level 3, and those who had completed some work beyond the four-year degree performed within the range of Level 4.

On the whole, the performance of high school graduates was not as strong as might be desired. On each scale, between 16 and 20 percent of adults with high school diplomas performed in Level 1, and between 33 and 38 percent performed in Level 2. Conversely, only 10 to 13 percent of high school graduates reached the two highest levels. As expected, the performance of adults with General Educational Development (GED) certificates was nearly identical to that of adults with high school diplomas. The average proficiencies and the distributions across the literacy levels were highly similar for these two groups.

Large percentages of four-year college graduates reached the higher levels on each of the literacy scales. Fifty percent were in Levels 4 or 5 on the prose and quantitative scales, while 44 percent reached those levels on the document scale. Still, the percentages who performed in the two lowest levels are quite large: 15 percent on the prose scale, 19 percent on the document scale, and 16 percent on the quantitative scale.

The relationship between education and literacy will be further explored in an upcoming special report.

TABLE 1.3A

Characteristics of Respondents by Prose Literacy Levels

DEMOGRAPHIC SUBPOPULATIONS	PROSE SCALE		Level 1 225 or lower	Level 2 226 to 275	Level 3 276 to 325	Level 4 326 to 375	Level 5 376 or higher	Overall Proficiency
	n	WGT N (/1,000)	CPCT (SE)	CPCT (SE)	CPCT (SE)	CPCT (SE)	CPCT (SE)	PROF (SE)
Country of Birth								
Born in the USA	23,376	172,162	75 (0.6)	92 (0.6)	95 (0.6)	96 (0.4)	97 (1.0)	279 (0.7)
Born in another country or territory	2,715	19,127	25 (1.3)	8 (0.9)	5 (1.0)	4 (0.7)	3 (1.0)	212 (2.4)
Education Level 1								
Still in high school	973	8,268	3 (1.5)	6 (1.9)	5 (2.0)	3 (1.4)	1 (0.6)	271 (2.0)
0 to 8 years	2,167	18,356	35 (1.6)	7 (1.3)	1 (0.7)	0† (0.3)	0† (0.0)	177 (2.6)
9 to 12 years	3,311	24,982	27 (1.3)	19 (1.0)	7 (1.0)	2 (0.4)	0† (0.3)	231 (1.5)
GED	1,062	7,224	3 (1.4)	6 (1.8)	5 (2.4)	2 (1.1)	1 (0.7)	268 (1.8)
High school	6,107	51,290	21 (0.8)	36 (1.3)	31 (1.2)	16 (1.0)	4 (1.0)	270 (1.1)
Some college (no degree)	6,587	39,634	8 (0.5)	18 (0.8)	29 (0.9)	26 (0.8)	17 (0.9)	294 (1.0)
2 year college degree	1,033	6,831	1 (0.8)	3 (1.8)	5 (2.2)	7 (2.4)	4 (0.9)	308 (2.4)
4 year college degree	2,534	17,804	2 (0.6)	4 (1.1)	10 (1.2)	22 (1.3)	30 (2.5)	322 (1.6)
Graduate studies/degree	2,253	16,306	1 (0.4)	2 (0.8)	8 (1.2)	23 (1.3)	43 (3.0)	336 (1.4)
Race/Ethnicity								
Black	4,963	21,192	20 (1.0)	15 (1.2)	7 (0.8)	2 (0.4)	1 (0.4)	237 (1.4)
Hispanic	3,128	18,481	23 (1.4)	9 (1.3)	6 (1.1)	3 (0.6)	2 (0.8)	215 (2.2)
Asian/Pacific Islander	438	4,116	4 (3.9)	2 (2.6)	2 (2.7)	1 (1.6)	1 (0.6)	242 (6.7)
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	189	1,803	1 (4.5)†	1 (3.7)†	1 (4.1)†	0† (1.9)†	0† (0.9)†	254 (4.1)†
White	17,292	144,968	51 (0.6)	72 (0.9)	84 (0.7)	92 (0.6)	96 (1.4)	286 (0.7)
Other	83	729	1 (8.9)	0† (5.6)	0† (9.1)	0† (3.7)	0† (0.2)	213 (17.5)
Age 2								
16 to 24 years	4,581	34,939	13 (0.8)	21 (1.3)	21 (1.1)	17 (1.1)	10 (0.9)	278 (1.0)
25 to 34 years	6,701	41,326	16 (0.7)	20 (1.0)	23 (0.8)	26 (1.0)	27 (1.5)	282 (1.2)
35 to 44 years	5,930	39,755	14 (0.6)	16 (0.9)	23 (0.9)	29 (0.9)	36 (1.3)	289 (1.3)
45 to 54 years	3,729	25,992	11 (0.8)	13 (1.1)	14 (1.3)	16 (0.9)	19 (1.0)	282 (1.7)
55 to 64 years	2,924	19,503	13 (1.4)	12 (1.2)	10 (1.1)	7 (0.9)	4 (0.7)	260 (1.9)
65 years and older	2,214	29,735	33 (1.5)	18 (1.5)	9 (1.1)	4 (0.8)	4 (1.1)	230 (2.1)
Any Physical, Mental, Health Condition								
Yes	2,606	22,205	26 (1.0)	13 (1.2)	7 (1.1)	3 (0.7)	2 (0.8)	227 (1.6)
No	23,256	168,879	74 (0.5)	87 (0.7)	93 (0.7)	97 (0.6)	98 (0.8)	278 (0.6)
Visual Difficulty								
Yes	1,801	14,296	19 (1.5)	7 (1.3)	3 (1.1)	2 (1.1)	1 (0.5)	217 (2.4)
No	24,260	176,764	81 (0.4)	93 (0.6)	97 (0.5)	98 (0.5)	99 (0.5)	277 (0.6)
Hearing Difficulty								
Yes	1,611	14,202	13 (1.6)	8 (1.6)	6 (1.2)	4 (0.9)	2 (0.8)	243 (2.6)
No	24,417	176,618	87 (0.4)	92 (0.7)	94 (0.6)	96 (0.6)	98 (0.8)	275 (0.6)
Learning Disability								
Yes	875	5,820	9 (2.1)	2 (2.0)	1 (1.4)	1 (1.1)	1 (0.6)	207 (3.7)
No	25,171	185,190	91 (0.4)	98 (0.6)	99 (0.5)	99 (0.4)	99 (0.4)	275 (0.5)

n = sample size; WGT N = population size estimate / 1,000 (the sample sizes for subpopulations may not add up to the total sample sizes, due to missing data); CPCT = column percentage estimate; PROF = average proficiency estimate; (SE) = standard error of the estimate (the reported sample estimate can be said to be within 2 standard errors of the true population value with 95% confidence).

† Percentages less than 0.5 are rounded to zero.

‡ Interpret with caution — the nature of the sample does not allow accurate determination of the variability of this statistic.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Adult Literacy Survey, 1992.

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